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REMARKS

Claims 1, 3-9, 11-13 and 15-21 remain in this application. Claims 1, 3-9, 11-13, 15, 16 and 20-23 are rejected. Claim 1 is objected to. Claims 2, 10 and 14 are previously cancelled. Claims 22 and 23 are cancelled herein. Claims 1, 9, 13 and 20 are amended herein to clarify the invention, to broaden language as deemed appropriate and to address matters of form unrelated to substantive patentability issues.

Information Disclosure Statement

In response to the Examiner's comments regarding an Information Disclosure Statement filed March 31, 2004, another Information Disclosure Statement was filed on April 29, 2004.

Claim Objections

Claim 1 is amended to remove the informality noted by the Examiner.

Claim Rejections-35 U.S.C. §112

Claims 1, 3-9, 11-13, 15, 16, 22 and 23 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph, on the grounds that the process of performing enrollment processing without the employment test when a non-member responds to recruitment

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information is not mentioned in the specification. Claim 22 is also rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. The subject matter of claim 22 is now included in claim 20 so the Examiner's rejections of claim 22 will be addressed with respect to claim 20.

The Examiner's rejections are respectfully traversed in view of amended claims 1, 9, 13 and 20. Claims 1, 9, 13 and 20 are amended to clarify the manner in which a non-member player is enrolled in the virtual company.

Enrollment is based on whether the non-member player is responding to recruiting information generated in response to a referral by a member player. When the non-member player responds to the recruiting information, although he or she takes an employment test, i.e., provides responses to a series of questions relating to the possibility of employment with the virtual company, it is considered as if the employment test is passed (as described in the specification at page 32, last two lines). However, if the non-member player is seeking employment without having been sent recruiting information, he or she must take the employment test and a determination must be made as to whether the non-member player passes or fails the employment test. Thus, a non-member player who takes the employment test (without receiving recruitment information) can fail the test and be denied the right to participate in the game. On the other hand, a non-player who receives recruitment information can provide responses which would otherwise result in failing the test

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but, since recruitment information was sent, this non-member player is considered to have passed the test and is allowed to participate in the game.

Thus, claim 1 now specifies that the enrollment processing means perform enrollment processing upon receiving application information from the non-member player depending on whether the application information is received from the non-member player in response to the recruiting information sent to the mail address of the non-member player. Specifically, the enrollment processing means "consider the employment test passed only upon receipt of application information from a non-member player in response to the recruiting information" and, when the non-member player provides application information not in response to recruiting information, the enrollment processing means performing enrollment processing with the employment test and determines "whether the non-member player passes or fails the employment test". Claims 9 and 13 include similar features. Claim 20 is amended to include similar features as well as subject matter from cancelled claims 22 and 23.

In view of the changes to claims 1, 9, 13 and 20, it is respectfully submitted that the Examiner's rejections of claims 1, 3-9, 11-13, 15, 16, 22 and 23 under 35 U.S.C. §112 have been overcome and should be removed.

Claim Rejections-35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 20 and 21 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over the "Contents of the New Products for Cell Phone" reference (the Contents

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reference) in view of the "Network News" reference and in further view of Klein et al. (U.S. patent No. 6,709,330).

The Examiner's rejection is respectfully traversed in view of amended claim 20. Claim 20 is amended to include subject matter from claims 22 and 23, which were not rejected in view of prior art. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the Examiner's rejection of claims 20 and 21 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) has been overcome and should be removed.

In light of the foregoing, the application is now believed to be in proper form for allowance of all claims and notice to that effect is earnestly solicited. Please charge any deficiency or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 10-1250.

Respectfully submitted,
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